

Ball State Graduation at the Indiana State Prison

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Ed Buss,

Indiana State Prison Superintendent



Michigan City, IN - (June 12, 2006) -The Indiana State Prison held a graduation ceremony Friday, June 2nd for offenders who earned college degrees from Ball State University. The program host was Dr. Charles Greenwood, Assistant Dean of School Extended Education. At the ceremony 60 offenders received Associate of General Arts degrees, 36 men received Bachelor of General Studies, and 104 men were listed on the Dean's List. Seven men 19.4 % of those who receive Bachelor degrees graduated with honors. They are Stephen Wieland, Summa Cum Laude, John Brammell, Magna Cum Laude, and Jesse Blakey, John Kuhn, David Landrem, John Rogers, and Lawrence Thomas receive Cum Laude honors.

Three offenders, who graduated with honors, were selected to address the audience. Stephen C. Wieland

began his speech with humor when he told the audience that a recurring nightmare had just come true. He said, “I am in a prison, standing in front of about 400 people, and I’m wearing something that resembles a dress.” He congratulated the Ball State students on their academic achievements. “By excelling in a program of this caliber, you men have proven that you have got what it takes to be successful in this world. Once you walk out of these prison gates, you are all capable of succeeding in society and living the American dream.” Stephen also researched and found that the introduction of education in prisons began in 1787 and found its way into American prisons in the late 18th century.

John A. Kuhn told the audience how he went from a disciplinary unit to earning a degree with Cum Laude honors. He also thanks all of the people who had helped him including, “Professor Michael Burchick for teaching us to see the stars more clearly so that we might know what we are reaching for”....

Lawrence J. Thomas, Sr. expressed his gratitude to Helen Gabriel, Director of Education and Vocation and the Education Department for providing him with an opportunity to participate in the Education Program for the last 10 years. At age 19 he was taking Adult Basic Education classes and a year later he passed his General Education Development tests and completed a Computer Business Program. Now he has received a Bachelor of General Studies degree, Cum Laude.

After the ceremony there was a reception for the offenders and their family members.

Superintendent Ed Buss said, “I am very proud of what each of these men have accomplished. I also commend Helen Gabriel our Director of Education, and her staff for developing an excellent environment so the offenders can mature and develop intellectually.”

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department’s home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department’s Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.